

SPECIAL MEETING

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MONDAY, AUGUST 23, 2004

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM

845 PARK AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 5:30 P.M.

PUBLIC SESSION: IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

MINUTES

A special meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at the William A. Briggs Building with the following members present: Mr. Cardarelli, Mr. Drager, Mr. Eramian, Mr. Lupino, Mr. Palumbo, and Mr. Stycos. Mrs. White was absent; she was on vacation. Also present were Mrs. Ciarlo, Mr. Scherza, Mr. Balducci, Mr. Votto, Mr. Scaffardi, Mr. Laliberte, and Mr. Traficante, Athletic Director.

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously carried that the members adjourn to Executive Session to discuss personnel under RI State Laws 42-46-5(1) personnel and PL 42-46-5(2) contract and litigation.

The roll was called.

Mr. Cardarelli noted that Mrs. White was out of town and had so notified the committee.

Mr. Cardarelli reconvened public session at 6:57 p.m.

Mr. Cardarelli stated that the purpose of this portion of the public session was to discuss the issue of the letter of demand as it refers to the topic discussed in Executive Session. Mr. Cardarelli asked for the committee's thoughts regarding writing this letter.

Mr. Eramian stated that he was in favor of writing the letter and getting the issue behind the committee. The committee could make a public demand that the district not pay for the audit.

Mr. Cardarelli asked the committee if they wished to see the letter before it is sent at the September 1st meeting, and Mr. Lupino responded that he would like to see it. He expressed his concern regarding Mr. Grimes's tone in the Cranston Herald article. Mr. Grimes made it specifically sound as if the School Committee didn't want the audit and that the committee is afraid of the audit. The tone of the letter should definitely be an exclamation point that the committee welcomes a fair audit and one that is unflawed without any wordsmithing. Mr. Eramian added that it should be according to the accounting standards that are required. Mr. Cardarelli remarked that the committee

has been asking for a real performance audit year after year, and they have been told year after year that the finances are not there to perform an audit. Now the city is squandering \$129,000, and the school department is getting nothing for it.

Mr. Drager stated that he agreed that a demand letter should be sent to recoup the cost encumbered by the city from the school department.

Mr. Stycos stated that Mr. Eramian raised some good questions regarding credibility of the study that should be raised with the city. He did not favor a demand letter because it gets the committee right to confrontation. From what he has heard, he did not think there was a chance of collecting a lot of money because the law does say the school department is suppose to pay for a performance audit. He knows the timing, so he doesn't see that as a great case. Ultimately, the committee is not shifting things from one hand to the other, and it is not saving the city any money as a whole. It is simply stating that A will pay rather than B. He doesn't think the potential gain will be very great.

Mr. Cardarelli stated that he has some concerns about it. He does support the demand letter, and he would like to see a draft copy before it is sent to the Mayor. He has concerns regarding sending it

out because of the judge's comments where he approved it in his ruling. He will find the ruling and bring it to the September 1st meeting. If he can find it sooner, he will have the secretary forward it to the committee in their update so that all the committee members could see what the judge said. Mr. Cardarelli went on further to say that the attorney made an excellent point that the judge did not approve a flawed audit. He agreed with Mr. Eramian's comments that it appeared to be a flawed audit with a tremendous lack of credibility, and there is a tremendous amount of questionable practices going on. This gentleman sounded like he was looking for an out. Mr. Cardarelli felt that Mr. Abrahams was trying to be fair, but the chips are stacked against him. It is a potential waste of the taxpayers' money, but it could possibly be a blood bath for the committee and the school system because he didn't think the citizens would tolerate \$129,000 going down the drain and the committee fighting over the money. Eventually, the committee will have to take this audit and fight the city on the merits of it. The committee will have to prove where they were wrong.

Mr. Palumbo stated that the committee should go forward with the letter of demand because there is no question in his mind whatsoever that the performance audit is flawed and not being presented properly. He would welcome an honest performance audit. Cranston has a wonderful educational system, and if there is an honest, straightforward performance audit performed, it will show this fact. He wants to stop letting anyone direct where it is going. He is very

much in favor of sending this letter.

Mr. Cardarelli asked that the record reflect that in open session the majority of the School Committee members supported asking their attorney to go forward with the

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demand letter. It will be available for the committee to peruse at the September 1st Executive Session. At that time, the committee will move forward. The letter will be addressed to the Mayor and copied to the Cranston City Council. Mr. Lupino suggested copying the Auditor General as well. In response to Mr. Drager's question as to whether or not the committee would ask the Auditor General to do another audit, Mr. Cardarelli responded that this would be left up to the attorney. Mr. Drager commented that if the Auditor General offers to do it for free, the committee should take him up on his offer. Mrs. Ciarlo stated that there is enough data out now regarding the system, and she didn't believe that Mr. Almonte would have to do it since information has been gathered before. She said that the district could not go another year checking its performance and doing audits over not maintaining its reputation as a good school system. She could not speak strongly enough on how much time it has taken away from all that had to be done last year. This year the administrators are trying to focus on teaching and learning in the schools. This system must have a year where it can move forward. Given the fact

that the Auditor General has been in the city and the school department in the past, he has a lot of information. The Bureau of Audits also has information regarding the school system. Test scores are the school department's product, and these won't be discussed in the audit. She further indicated that she doesn't mind the challenge, but she came back to do teaching, learning, and curriculum.

Mr. Lupino commented that the free audit would still have a bearing on the school system. He had previously asked Mr. Balducci about the possibility of recouping personnel costs in addition to the cost of the audit. It would not only be the \$129,000 but also lost time in the classroom, clerical time and administrators' time. He felt the committee should see where this goes first before asking for something else.

Moved by Mr. Lupino, seconded by Mr. Drager and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws PL 42-46-5(1) personnel and 42-46-5(2) contract and litigation.

The meeting adjourned to Executive session at 7:13 p.m.

Mr. Cardarelli reconvened public session at 7:22 p.m.

Moved by Mr. Eramian, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously

carried that the August 23, 2004 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.

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I. SPEAKERS – Agenda Items

Frank Flynn, CTA President - He stated that he wished to speak on the proposed restoration of funds. He indicated that it was most important to bring back some of the personnel from layoff. Mr. Flynn stated that there are currently twenty plus people out of work, and the union believes that these people provide a very valuable service to the schools, particularly in the area of literacy where there have been gains that have been made over the past several years across the board. Many of the plans have been recognized both statewide and nationally, and a lot of those plans will go by the wayside if these people are not brought back. He encouraged the committee to make this a priority in any of their future negotiations.

Carolyn Taylor, Literacy Teacher Assistant at Oak Lawn School – She stated that she has been involuntarily transferred. She had contacted a few people after last Monday evening’s meeting. Unfortunately, there are so many teachers assistants who, although they love their

jobs, understand the value and the importance that they give to Cranston's youngest children in the school system. The assistants are so fed up with three-hour positions being flip-flopped back and forth, and quite frankly she and another assistant couldn't get anyone else to attend this meeting because they feel that the committee's mind is already made up. She further stated that she is one voice, but she believed that she is an ant that can move a rubber tree plant. She and another assistant stated why they were valuable in their classrooms. The classes they have been in have over twenty-two students in each class. This may not seem like a lot of children, but when dealing with Kindergarten and Grade 1 students that have a wide variety of issues and situations going on at home and in the classroom that affect them on a day-to-day situation, not to mention the behavioral problems that the assistants are always combating, it is difficult. A classroom wouldn't need an assistant if all the children grasped each lesson equally. This doesn't happen in a normal classroom. There are low, middle, and high for better interpretations of intelligence in each class. The lower students need a lot of help and repetition to learn many of the lessons. In many instances, the assistants become their parents because many of the parents believe the village should raise their children. The children are sent to school not knowing how to write, read, and count. Many of them do not know how to write their names, and many of them are not equipped to be in a classroom. Many students don't have English as a second language. She asked the committee to visit the schools to see what these teacher assistants do on a daily basis for three-hours. They

give the city the biggest bang for its buck. If these children don't have the teacher assistants, she doesn't know where the testing numbers will be because they are constantly working with small groups of children. The teacher is the first line of defense, and from there the teacher pulls those children with whom she wants the teacher assistants to constantly repeat lessons. Then, if they still don't grasp the information with the teacher

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assistants, they start with an IEP. The teacher assistants help these children to be better students and to be more on task. Many of the children come to school with such an array of medicine that to get them to even sit down for five minutes is an amazing thing. Three weeks before school closed for the summer, her classroom saw three new children. One little boy was so far behind because he had been in five classrooms in one year. He had no idea where he was let alone what he was supposed to do as a first grader with three weeks left to become a second grader. The bulk of her time for the last three weeks was to help this little boy make his letters. If the committee takes away the teacher assistant positions, the youngest in Cranston will be hurt without their programs.

Mrs. Ciarlo stated that at the September 1st meeting there will be a

discussion as to how to use the money that was generated as a result of state aid. In response to Ms. Bryan's question as to whether or not there would be library clerks in the schools on the first day of school, Mrs. Ciarlo said that there will be none on the first day. Tonight is just the discussion on the teacher assistants because of the Jamboree that will be held tomorrow. They will be voted on at the regular meeting. On September 1st, the library clerks and a number of other issues will be discussed. She hopes to be able to convince the committee of the long list of things to do. She noted that literacy paras first began in this district in 1986, and she wants to continue this service.

II. RESOLUTIONS

Moved by Mr. Lupino, seconded by Mr. Drager and unanimously carried to move Resolution No. 04-9-2 before Resolution No. 04-9-1.

ADMINISTRATION

PERSONNEL

NO. 04-9-2 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the resignation of the following certified personnel be accepted:

Judi Liner, Elementary Teacher

Classroom Size Reduction, .5 FTE

Effective Date: August 23, 2004

Moved by Mr. Lupino, seconded by Mr. Drager and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

NO. 04-9-1 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following certified personnel be appointed for the 2004-2005 school year:

Lisa Skinner, salary to be at the second step of the prevailing salary schedule

Education – Rhode Island College, B.S.

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Experience – Cranston Public Schools Substitute

Certification – Elementary

Assignment – Classroom Size Reduction Teacher, .5 FTE (assignment to be determined)

Effective Date of Employment – August 31, 2004

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 11911012 512100

Moved by Mr. Lupino and seconded by Mr. Drager that this Resolution be adopted.

Mrs. Ciarlo commented that this appointment is one of the ways, in

addition to teacher assistants, that grant money is used to reduce class size. Administration is very concerned that the district maintain these. When it indicates classroom size reduction teachers, this means that the district is able to divide some of those teachers who will be responsible for literacy.

This Resolution was adopted unanimously.

NO. 04-9-3 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following non-certified personnel be appointed as substitutes on a temporary basis as needed:

TEACHER ASSISTANTS

Katie Myers, Teacher Assistant

Divina Diaz, Teacher Assistant

Moved by Mr. Lupino, seconded by Mr. Drager and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

NO. 04-9-4 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the resignation of the following non-certified personnel be accepted:

James Carillo, Part-time Custodian

Stone Hill School

Effective Date: September 1, 2004

Moved by Mr. Eramian, seconded by Mr. Drager and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

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III. Discussion on Proposed Restoration of Some Teacher Assistant Positions for Fiscal Year 2004-2005

Mrs. Ciarlo stated that included in the budget cuts were some teacher assistants, and some were in the area of students with special needs. She told the committee that it was absolutely necessary to have at least six teacher assistants for students with special needs taken out of Fund 1. Administration is also proposing that the committee accept as they are looking at trying to blunt some of the cuts to literacy teacher assistants which were down to zero. They restored ten and an additional one was added for Dutemple School. They are proposing five additional teacher assistant positions which still leaves the district at approximately one-half of what it use to be. This is not based on numbers alone but based upon need. There are some areas, based on the recommendation of principals and teachers, that a particular class may have a number of students with need. They don't necessarily have to have an IEP. Every one of the schools has shown remarkable improvement, and this should be shouted from the

rafters. By restoring the five positions, it may not suffice, but coupled with class size reduction teachers, the district is making sure that it doesn't lose the effort that was begun. It doesn't necessarily mean that it has to be a Title 1 school. There are twenty-five registered for Grade 1 at Stadium School, and something must be done to reduce that class size through a class size reduction teacher and a teacher assistant. The teacher assistant who spoke is absolutely right in stating that kids are not the same. Their lack of control makes it even more challenging than ever before. She would hate to see the good work that has been done put aside because of a difficult budget.

Mr. Drager asked Mrs. Ciarlo if she could give the committee a list of the major needs and where these people would go. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that there are still more registrations coming in now. She knows that some of the class sizes will change. The secretaries came back last Wednesday, and parents are registering between now and the first day of school. Another population count will be done this Friday and the following Friday in order to show the committee where teacher assistants and class size reduction teachers would be placed.

In response to Mr. Eramian's question as to the number of teacher assistants being called back, Mrs. Ciarlo said that there are 6/6 hour special education positions and 5/3 hour additional teacher assistants. The 6/6 hour teacher assistants are mandated, and Mrs.

Ciarlo will tell the committee where they must go. Mr. Eramian further commented that in the spring when the committee took the teacher assistants out of the budget they felt there were classes under the required class size, so state law did not mandate them. Now, the situation has somewhat changed and some students have moved into the district. Mrs. Ciarlo remarked that in addition to the six who are under Fund 1 the district will need another four in special education, and they will come out of IDEA funds.

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This district cannot afford to take any more out of Fund 1. It is a growing concern trying to balance what is needed in special education with what will be needed for students who will have special needs if their needs are not met in the regular classroom. Mr. Eramian said that there would be another four coming out of IDEA funds, and these are students who either moved into the district or the classes have changed. Mrs. Ciarlo remarked that she could remember adding ten in the middle of the year, so she felt the district should do it from the beginning. In special education alone, there will be ten. Six teacher assistants will be funded out of the operating budget, and four will be funded out of a grant. Mr. Eramian asked how many new students there are and how many are new to the district that are driving these numbers.

Mr. Stycos stated that when Mr. Cofone first put together the cut list, there were special education positions on the cut list, and he indicated that different special education classes had been assigned teacher assistants because they legally needed them because of the number of students in the classrooms. The following year the number of children in those classes dropped. The aid was no longer required, but the aid was not removed and kept in the classroom. This was discovered during the budget process scouring for a savings. He asked if there were going to be any special education teacher assistants in classes that were not required by the class size. Mr. Laliberte responded that most of the special education classes are opening the school year with between eight or nine children. With a class of eight, there needs to be a class size teacher assistant. There are some cases where a student may not need a one-on-one situation, but when the IEP Team met again this year, they made the decision that a child needed one on one. It could be a student moving from elementary to middle school, and he or she needed someone to work with that child on a regular basis for at least one year. There were internal changes that came about through the IEP process, some from children who moved into the district, and some with classes opening with large numbers. All of the teacher assistants will be working in classes where they are required or legally required because of an IEP and they need a personal care attendant. Mr. Stycos asked if anything had been done to make sure this same situation doesn't happen again in the future. Mr. Laliberte responded that they are trying to do it especially in the case of

personal care attendants. Administration is trying to assign them to a classroom so that there would be some freedom to use that teacher assistant throughout the classroom. When a teacher is starting the year with a minimum of eight students in a special education classroom, law requires a teacher assistant. There have been times when a teacher would open a classroom with five, and a teacher assistant would be there knowing that this teacher would gain more students as the year went on. This is not the case at the present time.

Mr. Stycos stated that at one time the committee received a memo from Mr. Balducci indicating that the 3% raise a teacher would get when he or she retires was taken away years ago so that when that teacher retired he or she would receive it. He believed Mr. Balducci's memo estimated that the account was \$165,000 short of what would be

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needed. He went on to say that when he looked at the figures as to how to spend this \$512,000, he didn't see the \$165,000 included. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that she was hoping through one of the budget revisions she can make it up. The district needs to go forward with program. During the course of the year, through a budget revision, the district will have a chance to make up the difference. She would rather do it at that time and start

out with the appropriate staff. She added that the staff is not appropriate, but it is better than what it was. Until she has a retirement letter in her hand, she doesn't count it. Many people talk of retiring, but it never happens. She will keep a very close watch on this. She has asked members of the staff who are contemplating retirement that if they let administration know in advance, they will pro rate for this year only the 3% raise the staff was to receive so that they could get a handle on how many were planning on retiring. To date, there are four people, and she expects a good deal more. She will revisit it after the first budget revision. Mrs. Ciarlo went on to say that she was recommending that the district start the year with a decent instructional program.

Mr. Lupino noted that Mrs. Ciarlo had mentioned that she might still revise the numbers. He asked if the parents of children being clustered to other schools had been notified. He said that he had received a number of calls regarding this. Mr. Scherza stated that the clustered parents have not been notified yet because of available personnel helping to make those decisions. He hoped to have the majority of them done this week. Mr. Lupino requested an update for these students by the opening of school.

Mr. Palumbo observed that he has been on record time and again that the committee should have all the teacher assistants back and the library aides back. He pointed out that he was very much for helping students and students with special needs. It seemed to Mr. Palumbo

that the children are driven into special education. As Mrs. Ciarlo has said on numerous occasions, the only way one can guarantee that students will receive this type of help is to drive them into special education because special education has a law that states the student must have certain services. Once the students get into special education, they never get out of it because they are receiving all these services. Mr. Palumbo further commented that he is not at all against helping students in special education, but it is an absolute shame that students who do not have an IEP and who are not in special education are not getting the services that the special education students are getting. The literacy program is trying to teach them all to read, and the same holds true for the mathematics program. The committee should be working very hard to try to get all of these people restored and stop wasting their time on whether or not they are going to put sports back. The committee should be working at this level first. The committee should keep this in mind when they start talking about taking money such as the state money, etc. The committee is trying to make this \$512,000 do much more than it can. Education should come first in the order of priority.

Mr. Cardarelli stated that in conversation with parents of special needs children in Cranston and in other communities, some of these excesses that occur are sometimes

the fault of the school systems themselves. They sometimes get forced upon the children and classrooms because of the bureaucracy in the system itself. Some of the parents have told him that they don't want the service for their child but because of the system's inaction and the bureaucracy of special education itself, the parent asked for a certain service and the district didn't want to deal with it. Finally, it took something in order to get it, and they threw some type of service at their child. All too often he has heard parents complain that someone didn't want to deal with a problem until it snowballed and forced an over reaction which, as a result, cost more money. People have to be more sensitive to what is going on, and if the problem were dealt with initially, it would cost much less.

Mr. Palumbo remarked that he remembered very clearly the conversation with Mr. Cofone regarding the teacher aides. They were needed at one time, but were left in the building after the need was no longer there. He knows that Mrs. Ciarlo has done many many things that other systems do not do in trying to stop these special education costs. The committee has to continue working toward that goal of reducing special education costs.

Mr. Drager commented that the teacher aid costs are not as high as a child going into full-time special education. With respect to school sports, it was his understanding that it was impossible to get back into the Interscholastic League. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that the

League has already done their master schedule. They changed it based on the fact that Cranston wasn't participating in middle school sports. It may be difficult, if not impossible, to get back in. She agreed with Mr. Palumbo that education is what this committee and district are about. Mr. Stycos stated that administration and the committee should help the students who are in need and those who are on the boarder line of needing help.

Mr. Cardarelli indicated to Mr. Traficante that the committee needed to see a draft on what intramural sports at the middle school level would cost in the district. Mr. Cardarelli said that he has no idea of what the cost would be. The committee was given three different proposals, and they voted on one of them. The number was never finalized after the number was injected from Mr. Flynn as to what the potential cost was. In response to Mrs. Ciarlo's question as to how difficult it would be to get back into the Interscholastic League for middle school sports, Mr. Traficante responded that he was the biggest advocate for sports in this city, but he had to be completely honest about this entire matter. He had told Mrs. Ciarlo previously that at this point in time the last thing the district needs is middle school sports partly because the district took three schools out of middle school sports that compete in the same division so the entire state had to realign itself. Secondly, the schedules are already done. The first week of playing is September 13th. He has already lost four of the six soccer coaches who have gone on to other jobs. He moved the Cranston East soccer team from Aqueduct to the Cooney field. The district is

not even sufficiently funded at the high school level. He had

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presented a zero based budget with absolutely no frills. He just paid \$9,000 worth of bills from last year with this year's money. He would rather do one thing right before

taking on something else. There are forty-eight boys at Cranston East participating in indoor track with one coach. One-third of the team practices at Cranston East, one-third practices at Park View, and one-third of the team practices at Bain. This is all done with one coach. The liability issues this presents is incredible. There is one adult supervising forty-eight students. There are 102 kids dressed for the Cranston West football team and 93 at Cranston East. There is a lack of paid assistant coaches. They need money for coaches, uniforms, and reconditioning. He realizes the value of middle school sports. He played as well as his children. He reiterated the fact that he would rather do something right. His concern is that the district will lose more student athletes to LaSalle and Bishop Hendricken because of lack of education and not because of middle school sports. Parents will take their children out when they hear derogatory remarks about Cranston's education; it has nothing to do with middle school sports. The district would have to pay the Rhode Island Interscholastic League \$200 per school to get back into the League.

Mr. Stycos stated that this entire timing issue was very upsetting.

The Legislature over-rode the Governor's veto on July 30th. On July 30th, the committee knew that it had \$512,000. He submitted a resolution for middle school sports, and a full hearing could have taken place on this issue. It was in plenty of time for the August School Committee meeting. At that meeting, the committee should have been discussing what to do with middle school sports, library clerks, and the teacher assistants so that they would have been all ready when school opens. Now, it has been delayed, and decisions have been made through the failure to do this in a timely manner even though the committee knew they had the money. So, a decision has been made not to have middle school sports, not through an open democratic discussion, but by a refusal to put a motion on the agenda. He felt this was an insult to all members of the School Committee who did not have a chance to make decisions on funding. The committee could agree or disagree on the decisions. They weren't able to make those decisions because this should have been on the agenda in August.

Mr. Lupino stated that everyone at this table who has spoken regarding middle school sports has spoken erroneously because the committee did not vote to cut middle school sports. They voted to cut middle school interscholastic sports to enhance the intramural program. This word is not getting out to the public. Mayor Laffey would like to make this a political issue by stating that the district doesn't have middle school sports. He received two calls from parents who wanted middle school sports put back in. He received

another three or four calls from parents who wanted to know if the district had it because they were interested in making other arrangements for their children, and none of them were going to private schools. They were interested in CLCF to play an extended program there. The baseball coaches from CLCF and Cranston Western would rather have the children not play middle school baseball because it interrupts

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their season. They get these kids later on in the season. South Kingstown still has not reinstituted their program. They also have expanded their intramural program. This word has to be disseminated to the public. He doesn't want to bend to someone who has a political agenda because it makes him look good in the media because he said "I am the champion of middle school sports" when it is not a necessary situation. He asked Mr. Stycos how many calls he received asking to put middle school sports back in, and Mr. Stycos said that he received none. Mr. Stycos told Mr. Lupino that he was missing the point. The committee didn't have the chance to have this discussion and make a decision when it counted. Instead, things were delayed; and a decision was made with a delay even though he had a resolution that he submitted in a timely manner that according to the rules of the School Committee should have been on that agenda. That is how people operate in a democratic process where there is a system and rules. People obey

the rules, and there are discussions and votes; but that is not what happens on this School Committee.

Mr. Eramian asked Mr. Traficante when the Interscholastic League set up the middle school schedule, and Mr. Traficante responded that he tried calling Mr. Amaral today who is the Director of Middle School Sports. A district is supposed to send in a certificate of competition in May. They realign the schedule probably during the month of July. Mr. Eramian noted that on July 30th, when the General Assembly overrode the Governor and the district had the money, this was a moot point. Mr. Traficante responded that the League would have allowed Cranston back in, but there would have been a fine. It would be difficult to get back in now because it is so late. The district needs four coaches, and there is a difference. Mr. Eramian asked what would have happened if action were taken on August 16th as opposed to August 23rd, and Mr. Traficante replied that once the middle school coaches found out that the district would not participate in middle school sports, they went elsewhere for coaching jobs. Mr. Eramian added that this happened before August 16th. During the last week, the district is in the same situation it was in previously.

Mr. Cardarelli stated that when the School Committee voted to change school sports, he voted to change it from option A to option B which was to go to middle school intramural sports. The district was going to advertise it at the beginning of school in order to get more

students involved. The students at Park View would compete against Bain as opposed to competing against Pawtucket. No one could tell him what the difference was for a child playing soccer against Park View or Pawtucket. There was no difference. There would be more kids involved playing soccer. The only differences were that there would be no traveling involved, and it wouldn't cost as much. Mr. Traficante commented that approximately seventy student athletes would participate in the fall, and there would be more than seventy students participating in intramural sports. He knows that Bain has more kids participating in intramurals now even prior to the elimination of middle school interscholastic sports because of how well their program was run by Mr. Hanson. Mr. Cardarelli said that he doesn't care if all the

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money came out of the sky tomorrow. The fact of the matter is that the district is not going to get enough money to justify going back to the interscholastic program.

Because of the political agenda of not only the Mayor but also of others, the district is not going to have the money to support adequately not only the sports programs at the high schools but also the arts, science and literacy programs, or the teacher assistant programs needed in the schools. It is morally wrong to be cutting in areas such as the textbooks and other areas to fund the middle school interscholastic program. This is his own personal opinion,

and he will not change his vote. There are so many other areas in desperate need. He told Mr. Stycos he doesn't care if he puts the resolution on five more times; it won't change his mind. The Mayor said he was going to give the school department the money. The Mayor can put it in a resolution; Mr. Stycos doesn't need a resolution. He felt that Mrs. White was correct in that the indication was that the Mayor was going to give the district the money. All he had to do was sign the check to send it here, and the committee could have taken care of it through a budget revision. If it passed, that would be it. The committee didn't need a resolution. There is so much desperate need to help the students Kindergarten through Grade 12 in so many areas, and with this city being so sports crazy, it is morally disgusting to talk about interscholastic sports. This is political baiting.

Mr. Drager stated that, in addition, the committee spent four hours discussing twelve poorly written resolutions on nutrition at the last meeting. The committee would never have gotten through the night if that resolution were on the agenda as well. There is a funding source and an estimate on the cost for intramurals. Mr. Cardarelli commented that the cost was unclear to him, and he wants to see the cost in writing. Mr. Drager stated that children's education comes first, and that is what the committee is hear for. Literacy and mathematics are the things the committee should deal with.

Mr. Palumbo stated that he couldn't agree more with what Mr. Cardarelli said. Interscholastic middle school sports shouldn't even

be thought of at this point. He agreed that it was being handled properly in that more students will be participating in a sport. He also agreed that the only reason people are talking about middle school sports is to influence voters in order to get their vote. He doesn't want the Mayor or anyone else, except the School Committee, to determine how the school department's money should be spent. He doesn't want the Mayor saying he will give the district money for middle school sports or anything else. The Mayor is trying to dictate how or what the school department will spend its money on, and this is extremely dangerous. Even if he gave the district the money, they could not go in that direction even if it was a good idea.

Mr. Lupino commented that intramural sports becomes more of an extension of the school day than competitive interscholastic sports where a select few get to practice or play in the game a few days a week. Intramural sports is an extension of the school day, and it is especially important in not only the poorer schools where the children go

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home to an empty house but also to more affluent homes where the moms have a busy schedule or both parents are working. Stadium School has a program called Make It and Take It where the cafeteria is absolutely filled with students that are having a good time and experiencing something beyond the six hours of instruction.

The money is better spent expanding the intramural program and making it available to more students.

Mrs. Ciarlo commented that, as far as the budget was concerned, until she has something in writing from the Rhode Island Department of Education, she doesn't believe that the district has the right to count it until the district has it. Her priorities are library clerks, teacher assistants, and texts, supplies and materials. Those are the things the district absolutely has to have. The Mayor asked to meet with her, and she took this as a good sign. Because the schools represent 53% of the budget, they will meet on a monthly basis. When the Mayor met with Mrs. Ciarlo, he mentioned that he wanted to use the restaurant tax money and use it for middle school sports. She told the Mayor that even before they can even consider discussing it, there are other high priority areas that must be discussed. After discussing all of those and if there is money available, she would share with the committee what the Mayor said. Mrs. Ciarlo added that the Mayor wanted the school district to come up with another \$17,000 to meet his amount. Mrs. Ciarlo asked the Mayor how many people had called him about middle school sports, and he indicated that he had received seven phone calls. Mrs. Ciarlo added that if the Mayor of the city of over 80,000 people had received only seven calls, this is not a burning issue. She told the committee that she has an obligation to tell them what is needed to run an effective program. She feels it was very important to have intramurals at the middle school level. It was more democratic and

gives kids more of an opportunity to participate in sports. Administration has to know whether or not they can put forward the six teacher assistants and the five three-hour literacy teacher assistants for the Jamboree to be held tomorrow.

Mr. Stycos pointed out that intramural sports and interscholastic sports are not exclusive. Within a month of Mr. Traficante's being hired, he urged him, Paul Cardoza and Mrs. Ciarlo to expand the intramural program. He stated that he was very much in favor of intramural sports. It is not an either/or situation. There is a situation where either the district will have a program or not. The district will not get the money unless it has the program. If the committee doesn't want to have the program and take a stand and be spiteful, that is their decision. However, this should have been discussed in August when a decision would have made a difference.

Mr. Lupino asked Mr. Stycos if he would consider rewriting the resolution that says the district is looking for money that would possibly be used for middle school sports. He could then bring it to the table, and the committee could vote to put it into textbooks. He asked if this would make sense. Mr. Stycos responded that he told Mrs. White that he would rewrite the resolution and sponsor it with other people. Obviously, the resolution

was not placed on the agenda. The point was that the topic should have been discussed, and it was not on the agenda for discussion in a timely way. The rules were violated, and according to Mrs. White, that is what Mrs. Ciarlo asked her to do. Mrs.

Ciarlo told Mrs. White that the Mayor had offered \$80,000 for sports. She asked Mrs. White on the phone why the committee would have to place a resolution on the agenda to ask the Mayor for something that he has already agreed to do. Mrs. Stycos responded that no one talked to him about it, and according to the rules, it should have been on the agenda.

Mr. Cardarelli asked the committee for their opinion regarding the six special education teacher assistants and the five three-hour positions. Mr. Cardarelli stated that Mrs. Ciarlo was looking for a consensored opinion from the committee to place these positions on the Jamboree. Mr. Cardarelli asked Mrs. Ciarlo if she had a dollar amount on what it would add to the budget. Mr. Stycos stated that the six teacher assistants would cost \$191,832 and the five teacher assistants would cost \$77,112. Mrs. Ciarlo noted that this was included in the \$512,000 package. They would be officially hired and recalled at the next School Committee meeting which will be held on September 1st. This information was included in the School Committee Update two weeks ago.

Mr. Eramian stated that it was necessary to bring back the six special education teacher assistants so that the district wouldn't be violating

state law. There are many things the district should have. Mrs. Ciarlo stated that they fit high on the priority list to reduce the cost of special education. By teaching the students in grades Kindergarten, 1 and 2 how to read, write and do mathematics, the students won't be going in for referrals.

Mr. Cardarelli asked for a consensored opinion from the committee. Mr. Stycos said that he agreed with Mr. Eramian that the special education teacher assistants made sense. For the other teacher assistants, he didn't know where they fit into the whole picture. That is one of the reasons he asked for the textbook analysis at the last meeting. Mrs. Ciarlo indicated that it would be included in this week's update. Mr. Stycos commented that he was concerned that when the district doesn't have enough textbooks and supplies, and people are looking for something such as a toner cartridge, that it demoralizes the whole system. He wants to look at those numbers before making any decisions on how the money should be spent. Obviously, the money has to be spent on the six special education teacher assistants.

Mr. Drager commented that the committee should have both the six and the five assistants. Mr. Lupino agreed that it should be six plus the five. Mr. Eramian stated that he would pass on the five assistants.

Mr. Palumbo agreed with both the six and the five. There is no way around it if the committee wants to keep the program going. Mrs. Ciarlo noted that these are still less than half that are needed.

Mr. Cardarelli noted that it was a majority opinion for the six assistants and the five assistants. Mr. Cardarelli commented that the next School Committee meeting was scheduled for September 1st.

It was moved by Mr. Lupino, seconded by Mr. Palumbo and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

**There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at
8:35 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Michael G. Cardarelli, Jr.
Clerk**